

for a similar care and mindfulness in our own encounters with both of them, rather than assuming the Shakespeare and the Montaigne congenial to our own sensibilities.

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The Fetters of Rhyme: Liberty and Poetic Form in Early Modern England.

Rebecca M. Rush.

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Rebecca Rush's *The Fetters of Rhyme* is historical formalism in full flower. This beautifully nuanced study begins and ends with John Milton, specifically his rejection of rhyme in the 1668 preface to *Paradise Lost*. In choosing to write the poem in blank verse, Milton claimed to be recovering the "ancient liberty" of epic by heroically rescuing it "from the troublesome and modern bondage of rhyming" (1). As an early modern politicizer of poetic form, Milton had a loud voice, but—and this is key for Rush's purposes—he did not have a lone voice. Rather, he was engaging in "a battle" over the moral, political, and cultural significance of rhyme "that had been raging since at least the sixteenth century" (1). The heart of the matter, as Rush makes clear, was rhyme's debatable status as formal limitation. Limitation can be construed positively, as unifying order and comfortable containment, or negatively, as forced confinement, fettering constraint. Reading across a careful curation of poetic practitioners and theorists from the 1590s to the 1670s, Rush explores the reasons for rhyme's shifting sociopolitical connotations: the political and personal histories that made one poet's fetters another poet's freedom.

Unsettling the sonnet's usual association with pining solitude and social withdrawal, the first chapter avers that in Spenser's sonnet sequence *Amoretti*, the sweet "bands" of rhyme signify social bonding, especially marriage. For Spenser, the artifice of rhyme reproduced the artificiality of the marriage bond, which reins in the natural disorderliness and violence of human passion, "[requiring] both parties to sacrifice life and liberty" (26) in order to attain a higher happiness in civil connection. Implicitly at least, Rush fashions Spenser into a pre-Hobbesian thinker for whom "the conjunction of two that forms the basis of the polity is not natural and established but artificial and hard won" (28). Spenser makes rhyme, like marriage, a necessary restraint whose captive bonds are preferable to the warlike state of nature.

In chapter 2, Rush sheds light on the English couplet's checkered past by turning to young John Donne as one of the satiric "couplet poets" (57), urbane wits who convened at the Inns of Court in the 1590s. Unlike the balance, moderation, and restraint marshaled by iambic pentameter couplets in the poetry of Dryden and Pope, the couplet form prior to 1600 had a "more risqué reputation" (57) that was "anything

but heroic" (59). In making the couplet their form of choice for satires, elegies, epigrams, and verse letters, Donne, Joseph Hall, John Marston, and others were reacting against stanzaic poetry as a pretentious European import, cladding their thoughts instead in the looser, lighter, naughty-but-native garb of Chaucer.

Marking a turning point in the history of the couplet, chapter 3 positions Ben Jonson as the poet who, following the Bishops' Ban of 1599, "contributed most to snatching the couplet from the fires and bringing it into polite society" (83). The reader is reminded here that rhyme alone does not a couplet make; Jonson's reform of the couplet largely hinged on his "regularizing its meter and pauses" (90). Bolstering the pursuit of rhyme not empty of reason, Jonson made the English couplet a more measured form whose steady pace was well suited to the task of expressing inner character and patterning virtuous living. Chapter 4 considers the impact of the English Civil War on verse form. Using Robert Herrick, Katherine Philips, and Abraham Cowley as case studies, Rush posits that the poets of the period sought "to retain the Jonsonian couplet but make it responsive to the passions," not least to accommodate the "extreme grief of a mourning nation" (126).

Chapter 5 brings us full circle to Milton, who in 1668 took arms against a sea of couplets. While contextualizing Milton's famous renunciation of rhyme in light of "his effort to craft a style distinct from the affective lyrics of the Royalists" (161), Rush looks back at the poet's earlier use of rhyme in *Comus*, *Lycidas*, and especially the sonnets. Ironically, Milton appears to be a son of Ben: wresting Jonsonian formalism from the royalists, his metric regularity and reasonable rhymes connoted discipline, civility, and liberty within bounds.

It seems only fitting to close this review with a rhyme. In *Cooper's Hill* (1655), John Denham mirrors the measured flow of the river Thames with lines that, while epitomizing the ethos of the heroic couplet, just so happen to provide proper praise for this book:

Though deep, yet clear, though gentle, yet not dull,
Strong without rage, without o'er-flowing full.

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The Trials of Orpheus: Poetry, Science, and the Early Modern Sublime.

Jenny C. Mann.

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"Orpheus's lute," muses Proteus in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, "was strung with poets' sinews" (3.2.77). In her new monograph, Jenny Mann links Shakespeare's observation to a broader theory of the sublime force of rhetoric and poetry. Her